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THE EVANS GALLERIES OF THE BOSTON MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

THE following description of the new Evans wing of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts is reprinted from the news columns of the Boston Evening Transcript of February 2nd, where it served to introduce an interestingly detailed account of this beautiful memorial of Robert Dawson Evans, a former Trustee of the Museum, built by his wife, Maria Antoinette Evans. These galleries are an integral part of the Museum as originally planned and were designed to contain the Museum collection of paintings. At present they hold in addition a comprehensive and important loan exhibition of more than a hundred paintings.

A great white temple in the hour before its dedication, the new Evans wing of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts stands ready to be opened. It has had one week in the quiet of privacy, in the repose of completion. Before were the years of clangor that went to its building, after come the centuries of its life as a public museum. To-morrow night the quiet ends and the public enters. Thousands of invited guests will throng the new Evans galleries on the occasion of their official opening. And thereafter the building will stand, free to all men dull or keen to the things of art, that it may seek realization of the hope of its donor, giving "inspiration to our citizens of to-day and to the generations to come."

Surely there never were galleries more capable of appeal to all men and tastes than these of the Evans Memorial. For its architect and decorators have combined to give the whole building a beauty that is always simple, dignified, and serene yet never stark in its severity or cold in its general effect. It has the beauty of well-proportioned architecture in stone and in marble, and with it the warmth of soft and diversified colors in wall-hangings and decorative materials. Yet it is true that the Sundour stuffs from England which cover most of the walls, beautiful though most of

them are, will surprise many visitors. For they vary from the quiet gray-green of the great eastern gallery, the brownish neutral tints of certain smaller rooms, to the two-toned green in the eastern gallery which throws its pattern into almost too bold relief and, in the two square galleries, to the brilliance of rose-crimson truly too colorful to be a perfect background for pictures. Yet it is these stuffs, with the beautiful floors of quartered oak, and the baseboards and doorways of American Verde Antique marble that make the warmth of the galleries, and relieve the austerity which has made so many museums both monotonous and oppressive. The latest improvements in methods of overhead lighting, provided in the Evans Building, give the best light, perfectly diffused and even, ever supplied in an art gallery. . . .

Many features of excellence distinguish the new building. Important among them is the relationship which the new wing bears to the Huntington Avenue building and to the further additions which will ultimately be made, in that it is a perfect unit in the plan for making each department of the museum in the end a complete, self-contained whole. Thus by the facilities provided in the new wing, the Department of Prints is permitted to enter for once into its own. From the days when its collection consisted in 1872 of a single print, until 1874 when the bequest of Charles Sumner added eighty-four more exhibits, the department has now accumulated a collection of over eighty thousand prints and has come very much to need the adequate quarters which the Evans wing provides. With great foresight all the plans of the new building have been drawn so that they will contribute to the arrangement and success of the further units which will be built for other departments.

The system of overhead lighting has been improved to a point of perfection seldom if ever reached in a museum of art. The ventilation has been scientifically planned and should prove wholly equal to the building's need for

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fresh, pure air, neither too cold nor too dry or damp.

The galleries open into each other in pleasing perspective. Distant glimpses stretch away down corridors that contrast effectively in their whiteness and glamour to the soft tints of the picture-rooms, and that carry the eye time and

An editorial in the Transcript of February 3rd, quoted here in part, looks beneath the surface for the real significance of this latest opening, and lays down certain dicta which have a familiar sound to those who have heard the discussions of museum authorities or read the columns of the BULLETIN and other museum publications,



GALLERY II, EVANS WING
BOSTON MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

again to the graceful figure of the Bacchante in her privileged position at the central point of the main floor. The Tapestry Gallery could give any aesthete cause for artistic excitement no less violent because the room is restrained and dignified, such subtle beauty of tint and materials, of proportion and harmony does this throne room of the museum's loveliness express. A particularly effective view may be had into the Tapestry Gallery from any point on the two reverse flights of the main stairway.

but which have an added force as emanating from the daily press.

Just at a time when museums are under attack for alleged failure to reach the masses, the Boston galleries are given fresh magnetism to attract from all classes, to approach the full measure of service which such an institution can do for the community.

And what is this "full measure of service"? Surely it does not lie in the mere gift of passive pleasure, whether to a hundred visitors or to all a city's hordes. A museum must give active inspiration, a

positive stimulus to new performance. If it be truly the "home of the muses," it cannot enshrine a dead reliance on the things of the past, but must waken our minds to the value and need of present accomplishment. For the recent criticism of museums has been just, not so much in its charges that they were oppressively monotonous and too crowded for human comprehension, as in its complaint that "the idea of a museum," carried to excess, can stifle new production. There is small doubt that Italy's vision has been distorted by too much gazing backward, through the doors of her countless museums and the gates of her old churches, to the golden age of her greatest artistic attainment. But here again the trustees and directors of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts have done much to counteract a dangerous tendency. Their purpose to stimulate production is seen in such equipment for instruction in the art of engraving as is installed in the department of prints, now for the first time adequately housed in the Evans wing. The department of paintings has long been busy with the work of teaching. Evidently it is appreciated by the authorities in charge, that a museum has a function not unlike the lecturer's—"to create, not to satisfy, curiosity," to foster original accomplishment. Truly we look to the future from a watch-tower built by the past.

THE LAST COMMUNION OF ST. JEROME

BY SANDRO BOTTICELLI¹

THE little painting of the Last Communion of St. Jerome—or "Il Transito di San Girolamo," as the subject was called in the fifteenth century—which passed from the ownership of the Marchese Farinola of Florence into the collection of Mr. Altman not long before his death, has already been

described by me at length in my book on Sandro Botticelli, which appeared in 1908. To what I there said concerning the iconographic and aesthetic aspects of the picture, I have little or nothing to add; but since writing that account, I have found in the Florentine Archives a document which throws no little light on its early history, and which, moreover, records, among other matters of interest, the name of the patron for whom Botticelli executed this and another work now lost. At the time of the sale of the picture to Mr. Altman, a writer in the daily press put forward the theory that it was painted for some member of the Florentine family of the Capponi, since the panel is known to have been in the possession of Gino Capponi, at Florence, in the earlier part of the last century. Gino Capponi, however, was not only one of the most distinguished historians and antiquaries of his day, in Italy, but also, it would seem, an ardent collector of paintings by the early masters: and we now know that, so far from the picture having been painted for some scion of that distinguished and aristocratic family, it was done for a member of the bourgeoisie, an "uomo popolano." But to come to its history:

On the 28th February, 1502-3, "in the sacristy of the church of San Marco," at Florence, "Francesco di Filippo Del Pugliese, citizen and merchant" of that city, executed his will and testament, in the presence of the prior and six friars of the convent. The instrument was drafted by Ser Lorenzo di Zanobi Violi, the notary who took down in cipher a large part of Savonarola's sermons. Francesco was, at that time, nearly forty-five years of age, "ricco, senza figliuoli"—a man of considerable wealth, but without children: and his only near relations, his two first cousins, Filippo and Niccolò, were likewise without male issue. In view of the probable failure of his own branch of the family, at no very distant date, Francesco framed a will by which, in that contingency, he set aside a large part of his property for religious purposes. After making certain minor provisions, he appoints, in default of his own male issue, his cousins, Filippo and Niccolò, the sons of Piero di Francesco Del Pugliese,

¹The following article has been contributed by Herbert P. Horne, the distinguished architect and writer, whose book, *Sandro Botticelli*, was published in 1908.